

Week 8

THE JERUSALEM CHURCH IN ACTION – PT 3

Eternal vs. Temporal

In chapter four we begin to see the real power struggle unfold between the powers of this world and the next. For the Jews, the Sanhedrin were the highest ruling authority. They were believed to be God's emissaries to help the people keep in line with God's plan for their theocracy. As such, the members were always from the ruling class of the people. The common man was never promoted to join the Sanhedrin.

There were two classes of courts which were called Sanhedrin, the Great and the Lesser. A lesser Sanhedrin was comprised of 23 judges and was appointed to the court in each city. However, there was only one Great Sanhedrin; it was comprised of 71 judges, which basically acted as the Supreme Court, taking appeals from cases which were decided by lesser courts. Typically, when the gospels speak of the Sanhedrin it is the Great Sanhedrin they are referring to as the encounters take place in Jerusalem.

During the Second Temple period the Great Sanhedrin met in the Temple in a building called the Hall of Hewn Stones. They met every day except for Sabbath and festival days. As the highest ruling authority for the Jews, they had the power, or so they thought, to quell this 'uprising' of Christ followers. The story of the power struggle that is unveiled on the pages of Acts and the Gospels can be seen as a metaphor for the struggle that always exists in all places, between the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of God.

As Peter and John are arrested, we see the beginning of persecution that will soon follow. Jesus warned them that the world would not like them if they served Him as Lord. I wonder if the Apostles were at all surprised by the Temple leaders being so resistant to such an obvious miracle. One can begin to wonder, if they weren't moved to faith by that, what would move them? This question has been asked wherever and whenever great things have been done in the power of Jesus' name.

This all goes to show what St. Paul said in Ephesians 6, that our struggle isn't against flesh and blood but against evil forces. Even our religious institutions like the church can be tools used by Satan and work against the kingdom of Christ. The Temple was the 'church' of the Apostles' day and age; it was the called-out people of God. The Greek word for church is 'ecclesia', which means the "called-out" or the "gathered".

In every age the church must be sure that its goals are the goals of the gospel – to advance the kingdom of light and love of Jesus Christ.

C. THE CHURCH MINISTERING IN JERUSALEM (3-8:3)

1. A Sign to Israel: A Lame Man Healed – The 1st Miracle of the Church Age (3:1-11)

a. The habit of the Apostles

- The Liturgy of the Hours

b. Lame from birth

- Common in the East for beggars to position near shrines
- No one could deny the miracle was of God

c. The Oneness of Apostolic ministry

- The one thing the church has is what the world needs
- The age of miracles – have they stopped?

2. A Warning to Israel: Peter's Sermon (3:12-26)

a. Early Christian preaching

1. The Cross
2. The Resurrection
3. The Power of the Risen Lord

b. Knowing their limits opened unlimited possibilities

- “Yet not I, but through Christ in me”

c. the Old Testament prophecies Jesus

- Moses is specifically quoted
- All prophets pointed the way to Jesus

d. The preaching and healing led to arrest

- Thousands more believe – The church grows exponentially

3. The Reaction: Persecution (4:1-37)

a. The animosity of the religious leaders (4:1-22)

- The offense of power
- The undeniable reality of anointed ministry
- The conviction of true faith

b. The prayer for boldness (4:23-31)

c. The continuing unity of the church (4:32-37)

Revive Us Again: How the Church Changed the World and Can Again

Study Notes – Week 7
